



# Best Management Practices for Construction and Development Projects

## Sheepnose

*Plethobasus cyphus*

**Common name** • Sheepnose  
**Scientific name** • *Plethobasus cyphus*  
**Federal status** • Endangered  
**State status** • Endangered

### Purpose and Use

The information in this document is to be used to help avoid and minimize species impacts due to construction practices. It is not intended to be used as a guide to manage habitat for a given species. If that is the goal, please contact the Department of Conservation for habitat management information. Because every project and location differs, following the recommendations within this document does not ensure that impacts will not occur to the species and additional information might be required in certain instances. Following the recommendations within this document does not complete Endangered Species Act consultation that may be necessary for species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act; please contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for more information.

### Ecology

In Missouri, the Sheepnose is limited to the Meramec River basin in the east-central part and the upper Mississippi River in the northeastern part of the state. It has been found in a range of substrates but in the Meramec River seems to prefer a sand-gravel-cobble substrate in swift to moderate current. It can be found in water that is a few inches to 2 feet deep. Mussels are filter feeders that pump water through their siphons to collect food particles from the water. They gather necessary nutrients and remove unwanted toxins from the water through this process. Almost all mussel species depend on a fish host to complete their life cycle. Mature adult mussels release glochidia (the immature stage), which must attach to the gills or fins of fish to complete their development. After an average of 2-4 weeks, the newly metamorphosed juveniles drop from the fish; and if they land in suitable habitat, they will burrow into the substrate and grow to repeat the cycle. Fish are an important link in the reproductive cycle of mussels and, typically, only certain species of fish are suitable hosts. Little is known about the life history of the sheepnose. The species is thought to spawn in the spring with gravid females releasing glochidia through July. The sheepnose reportedly uses the sauger as its fish host.

### Reasons for Decline

Historically, Sheepnose populations extended throughout the river systems in much of the Midwestern United States, from Minnesota south to Louisiana, Iowa east to Ohio. Although little research has been done specifically on this species, the Sheepnose is like most mussels in that its population has continued to decline over the last few decades. Alteration and degradation of habitat as a result of rural and urban development has very likely adversely impacted them. Such practices as dam construction, gravel mining, removal of trees and undergrowth along the stream bank, and non-point source pollution from agriculture and urban areas have probably contributed to the decline. These practices have reduced available habitat, increased stagnation of bottom waters, increased siltation, and possibly eliminated or reduced fish hosts.

### Specific Recommendations

Habitat availability and water quality are likely the limiting factors for the Sheepnose. Correcting these problems would go a long way toward saving many species of mussels.

- A survey of the waterways in the project area should be conducted by a trained biologist in order to identify occurring populations of this species.
- Dams and other impoundment structures that alter water depth and turbidity and promote siltation should be avoided in rivers that contain habitat for the Sheepnose.
- No work should be allowed below the high bank of the stream between April 1 to July 31.
- All equipment that enters the waterway should be washed and checked for juvenile zebra mussels before entering another body of water. This will help prevent the spread of this exotic European mussel species that can negatively impact native aquatic organisms and mussel species like the sheepnose.
- Freshwater mussels are relatively very immobile animals. If mussels are present in the substrate within the project area or present nearby downstream, they can be negatively impacted at any time of the year by direct substrate disturbance, destabilization of the stream bank, sedimentation following substrate or bank disturbance, introduction of chemical or organic pollutants, or indirectly through impacts to the fish host; every effort practicable should be made to avoid or minimize activities that alter or destabilize stream bottoms or banks, or introduce pollutants.
- Following these recommendations does not ensure there will be no negative impacts on this species or its habitat, because every site and project

differs. However, these recommendations identify practices that will help avoid and minimize some project impacts.

## **General Recommendations**

Refer to Management Recommendations for Construction Projects Affecting Missouri Streams and Rivers.

If your project involves the use of Federal Highway Administration transportation funds, these recommendations may not fulfill all contract requirements. Please contact the Missouri Department of Transportation at 573-526-4778 or [www.modot.mo.gov/ehp/index.htm](http://www.modot.mo.gov/ehp/index.htm) for additional information on recommendations.

## **Information Contacts**

For species information:

### [Missouri Department of Conservation](#)

Resource Science Division  
P.O. Box 180  
2901 W. Truman Blvd  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180  
Telephone: 573/751-4115

For species information and Endangered Species Act Coordination:

### [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)

Ecological Services  
101 Park Deville Drive, Suite A  
Columbia, Missouri 65203-0007  
Telephone: 573-234-2132

For Clean Water Act Coordination:

### [Missouri Department of Natural Resources](#)

Water Protection Program  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176  
Telephone: 573/751-1300, 800/361-4827

### [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#)

Regulatory Branch  
700 Federal Building  
Kansas City, MO 64106-2896  
Telephone: 816/983-3990

### [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#)

Water, Wetlands, and Pesticides Division  
901 North 5th Street  
Kansas City, KS 66101  
Telephone: 913/551-7307

wish to voluntarily act to protect wildlife and habitat. Compliance with these Best Management Practices is not required by the Missouri wildlife and forestry law nor by any regulation of the Missouri Conservation Commission. Other federal laws such as the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act, and state or local laws need to be considered for construction and development projects, and require permits and/or consultation with the appropriate agency. Following the recommendations provided in this document will help reduce and avoid project impacts to the species, but impacts may still occur. Please contact the appropriate agency for further coordination and to complete compliance requirements.

## **Disclaimer**

These Best Management Practices were prepared by the Missouri Department of Conservation with assistance from state and federal agencies, contractors and others to provide guidance to those people who